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# "Just Aunt Dinah, and The Life She Saved."

*By* **MRS. EDNA M. KINSMAN**

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## CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES.

**AUNT DINAH.** A large colored woman, of sunny nature. Dress—a green waist with sleeves rolled to elbows, a red skirt, yellow and green checked, or a plain yellow kerchief, blue and white checked apron and a red turban; all to be of a dull appearance.

**ROSEINE SNOW.** "The heiress," or better known as "Honey Chile," is a white girl, age sixteen years, of a loving disposition. Dress—bright pink and white checked pinafore over a plain white muslin dress. Wears a large white sunbonnet. Black stockings and shoes.

**MADAM SNOW.** A white lady of refinement, Aunt to Roseine, has a selfish, deceitful nature; an enemy to her niece Roseine. Dress—of black material and wears a large black picture hat.

## SCENE.

Interior of a log cabin. The room consists of one wood table, two wood chairs, wood wash-tub set in or near center of room, containing about three to four inches of soap suds.

## ACT I.

(Aunt Dinah enters stage, limping and carrying washboard in right hand, towards center of stage, facing audience says, with left hand on hip—) The Lor' bless us! Them rheumatics done take me again. Melinda says how rheumatics comes by rain. Little Honey Chile says how I harrowed dem from futher, I done reckon dat little honey chile am right. (Calls, looking towards door) Honey Chile, Honey Chile, Whar am youah at?

(Roseine's voice at a distance) I am coming Auntie. (Roseine appears with merry laughter) Here I am, Aunt Dinah.

**AUNT DINAH.** Whar youah done bin?

**ROSEINE.** Only out there, Auntie, playing school with Rover. O, Auntie, (gesticulating with hand pointing a finger at Aunt D). Rover know everything, just like a human being!

**AUNT DINAH.** Beans, Honey, beans. (Places wash board across tub, sits down on same.)

**ROSEINE.** (With disgust) Why, Auntie, I didn't say beans.

**AUNT DINAH.** Youah didn't, Honey?

**ROSEINE.** Why certainly not. I said he was just like a human being. I mean, he understands everything, just like you and I.

**AUNT DINAH.** Just like me and youah, honey?

**ROSEINE.** Yes, Auntie, just like you and I. (While Roesine says the above, Aunt Dinah laughs heartily, the board slips, letting Aunt Dinah into

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tub. Roseine advances to tub, takes Aunt Dinah's hand, explaining—)  
Auntie, Auntie, What have you done?

(Aunt Dinah rises from tub, turning back to audience with suds on back of dress, looks into the tub. Then faces audience, saying with up-lifted hands—)

AUNT DINAH. The Lor' bress us! I done spoilt the water.

ROSEINE. (laughingly) O, never mind the water, Auntie; there is always plenty of water in old Kentucky.

AUNT DINAH. Honey, it am youah brithday. (Places hands on stomach, bends forward, saying) Honey, I done got youah a present.

ROSEINE. O, I know, Auntie; what it is; a nice new bonnet! (Takes off sunbonnet, swings it by the ribbons.)

AUNT DINAH. I reckon dat leetle honey will hab to guess agin.

ROSEINE. (Inhaling short breaths and gesticulating smiles with hand towards Aunt Dinah) O, I know, Aunt Dinah, a great big, fat chicken.

AUNT DINAH. I reckon it am a ole chickun, honey.

ROSEINE. Very old, Aunt Dinah?

AUNT DINAH. Reckon it am, voted fo' Grover Clevealand. (Aunt Dinah moves towards first entrance limping, gesturing with hand to Roseine, says in a sing-song tone) Come 'long, leetle honey, come 'long, got a rooster in the oven and he is dead I know. He belong to Uncle Sannie, but nebber more will crow. (Some one off stage blows whistle to resemble the crowing of a rooster) Come 'long, leetle honey, come 'long, got dat rooster in t'oven and gravery all dippin' (rubs stomach, laughing heartily, saying) aha, um, um, come 'long, honey, come 'long. (Exit Aunt Dinah.)

(ROSEINE, placing hands behind her, looking after Aunt Dinah, says) Dear old Auntie. What should I do without you!

(AUNT DINAH returns, saying) Dat rooster am tough, jess though as dis ole brack hide am. (Slaps her arm.)

ROSEINE. (Advances towards Aunt Dinah) O, Auntie, you should not say such things about yourself because color makes no difference, for when you cross the river Jordan you will be made white, whiter than snow.

(AUNT DINAH faces audience with up-lifted hands and terror on her face, explains) Lawd bress us! They done gwine t'skin me.

(ROSEINE, with pitiful look and hand behind her) Poor soul! Poor soul! You do not comprehend.

AUNT DINAH. (Surprisingly facing audience) Good Lawd bress us! Dat 'er child done called me ole hen. (Faces Roseine shaking hand at her indignantly, says) Now see yere, honey, I knows I'es brack, jess brack as can be, but I ain't no ole hen.

ROSEINE. Why, Auntie, I did not say you were an old hen.

AUNT DINAH. Youah didn't, honey?

ROSEINE. Why certainly not; I said, you did not comprehend. You see, Auntie, if you are very, very good and never tell a falsehood and never, never take that that does not belong to you, I mean if you never sin, you will go to heaven.

AUNT DINAH. (thoughtfully) W'en I takes a chickun honey, am dat a sin?

ROSEINE. Yes, Auntie.

AUNT DINAH. Am it a sin w'en I takes a rooster?

ROSEINE. Oh, yes, Auntie, that is an awful sin.

(Aunt Dinah counts fingers on both hands slowly, one by one, to herself)

ROSEINE. Why, what are you doing, Auntie?

AUNT DINAH. I dun reckon up my sins. (Then counts fingers again, when finished, begins to cry with apron to her eyes.)

ROSEINE (Approaches, saying). What are you crying for?

AUNT DINAH. I dun stole so many sins.

ROSEINE. Why, that was no sin, for you didn't know that it was wrong before; but now I have told you, it would be a sin.

AUNT DINAH. (Begins to smile, wiping away tears) What youah dun tell me fo' den. (Turns, moving towards tub, limping, takes off apron, puts into tub, saying) Honey chile, I reckon you'll fetch me t' soap.

ROSEINE, (Goes to door laughingly, says) All right, Auntie, I will now proceed onward.

AUNT DINAH. (excitedly) Honey, honey, w'at am youah at? Come yere.

ROSEINE. (Approaches Aunt Dinah) What is it, Auntie?

AUNT DINAH. Now see yere, honey, youah dun make a sin.

ROSEINE. Why, Auntie, what have I done wrong?

AUNT DINAH. Now see yere, honey, you can plant seeds in a hole, an' throw seeds over t'fence, but I reckon, honey dat youah can't plant seeds on wood.

ROSEINE. O, Auntie, I never said anything about planting seeds on wood. I said I would proceed onward, or, in other words, 'Au revoir, Auntie, 'Au revoir.' (Roseine goes out. Aunt Dinah raises both hands, waving them, saying) Oranges, honey, Oranges. (Aunt Dinah then turns limping toward center, saying)

AUNT DINAH. I reckon dat I'll be jess smart as de wite folks am, wid honey chile, fo' I'll do jess as honey chile does. (Aunt Dinah begins walking imitating Roseine) They done gwine t'skin yere, dat means yere gwine t'be wite some day. Yo'll am dat ole hen, dat dis youah don't know what I am talkin' 'bout. (Aunt Dinah turns retracing steps across stage, still imitating Roseine.) I now plant seeds on wood, an dat means (faces audience, waving hands as before) Oranges, Oranges. (At last word, knock at the door and Aunt Dinah calls) Come in, dar, Come in.

(Enters MADAM SNOW, saying to self, glancing around room) Yes, yes, This is the very place and the very old wench that upset my plans.

AUNT DINAH, (looking at Madam Snow) I jess wonder what dat wite lady am at, (shakes her head) fo' no good, I reckon.

MADAM SNOW. (addresses Aunt Dinah) What, do you live here all alone?

AUNT DINAH. (places both hands on hips, saying proudly) No, I reckon how me and leetle honey live not alone.

MADAM SNOW. Yes, yes, this is the very place. (Begins in angry mood to pace floor, closely followed by Aunt Dinah) Now, I will see if, once again my plans will be upset. This time I will do the job myself; had I not depended on the nurse fourteen years ago all would have been well and I would have had a fortune; as it is, I must be contented with half a fortune and the girl on my hands. O, well, it will not last long; once she is in my hands and I will soon put her out of the way—then, the fortune will be mine. This alone ought to bring her. (Takes a sealed letter from her pocket, addressed to Miss Roseine Snow, turns quickly, shows surprise to find Aunt Dinah close to her heels. Aunt Dinah starts also) You here.?

AUNT DINAH. (bowing low.) Deed I am.

MADAM SNOW. I wonder how much she has heard. O, well, it won't

make any difference. (To Aunt Dinah) Here is a little token I have brought to your white child. See that you give it to her.

AUNT DINAH. 'Deed I will.

MADAM SNOW. Now, now, success will be mine. (Withdraws with an aristocratic, triumphant air.)

AUNT DINAH. My sakes! Dat yere wite lady think she whole lot.

Enters ROSEINE. Here you are, Aunt Dinah. (Places soap on wash-board.)

AUNT DINAH. Lor' bress youah, honey! I reckon how I couldn't live without youah. (Roseine turns to go out) Honey, chile, Honey chile, Come yere. Yere am a piece of wite paper fo' youah, what dat wite lady done fetch youah.

ROSEINE. O, thank you, Aunt Dinah, I wonder what it can be.

AUNT DINAH, (Standing behind Roseine, looking over her shoulder) It done be what dat wite lady fetch.

(ROSEINE opens letter, reads aloud the following.)

To my dear Niece, Roseine Snow,

Are you aware that you are a great heiress, and that a beautiful home awaits you? A home of splendor, where the luxuries of life are at your command, if you will submit to give up your old life and never, never to visit that inferior home again? Decide at once! Accept this offer, you have a position of wealth and the other, poverty forever! Take your choice! (While Roseine reads last words Aunt Dinah begins to sob, sobs growing louder and using her kerchief, says.)

DINAH. Lawd bress yo, honey, after all dese years I reckon how youah gwine t'leave me. I knows I'es brack, honey, an' dis leetle log hut am all we got, de good Lawd knows I loves youah, honey, ever since dat day wen youah was a leetle pickanniny: jess see honey, (begins pointing to living picture at the distance or of long ago) dem air hosses a-running down dat hill an' dar am a leetle wite pickanniny in de wagon, dar by de wood, an' all dem air niggahs a-shoutin' an' jess w'en dem air hosses gwine t'spring on pickanniny dere am one niggah dat jumps fo' dem wite hosses an dar an' dem the leetle wite pickanniny am saved; an' honey, dat leetle wite pickanniny am youah.

ROSEINE (Takes Aunt Dinah's hands) Yes, the noble hands that saved me were these, and you have cared for me ever since. O, how can I ever leave you?

(AUNT DINAH turns, walking towards chair, pauses, turns towards Roseine, points to door, saying) Go, Honey, go to de beautiful home dat waits fo' youah. (Drops into chair sobbing, using her kerchief.)

ROSEINE (Begins to read letter aloud at—) "Accept this offer, you have a position of wealth—the other, poverty forever!" (Looks from letter) O, how can I ever leave Aunt Dinah! (Glances at the chair where Aunt Dinah sits. Reads from letter) Take your choice." (After a moment's thought glances at Aunt Dinah. Then tears up the letter, throwing the pieces revengefully to th floor, runs with outstretched arms to Aunt Dinah, saying as she goes) Auntie, Auntie, I have taken my choice! (Drops to knees in front of Aunt Dinah, drops her head in Aunt Dinah's lap as in prayer. Aunt Dinah places her arm around Roseine. Both look toward heaven as Aunt Dinah says) May the good Lawd bress youah!

(At Roseine's beginning to read her letter the piano or orchestra plays softly "Hearts and Flowers," and stops at the words "Auntie, I have taken my choice." As Aunt Dinah places her arm around Roseine, play the chorus of "My Old Kentucky Home, Good-night." Curtain.)

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